

**Comments from the Chair of the  
Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee**



## **COMMENTS FROM CHAIR OF WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **COMMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE, 19 JULY 2019**

Arising from our meeting held on 17 July 2019, I wish to raise the following matters on behalf of the Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

#### **1. Motion - Climate Change emergency:**

You will recall that at your last meeting in June, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee strongly put forward the view that it was essential that the West of England Combined Authority demonstrates leadership in the region in relation to climate control and that, as soon as possible, the Combined Authority (through the West of England Combined Authority Committee) should itself declare a Climate Emergency.

We therefore welcome, in general terms, the motion submitted by Mayor Bowles calling on the Combined Authority to declare a climate emergency at today's meeting.

We would also encourage Mayors and Leaders of the respective authorities to work to a shared expectation and agreement on the actions that must be taken to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. We would like to receive further information as soon as possible on that action plan that is proposed through this motion; and we welcome the fact that it is proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive 6 monthly progress reports.

We would also urge that climate change considerations are placed at the forefront of the delivery of, and reporting of progress on all Combined Authority projects, strategies and plans.

#### **2. Constitutional changes (agenda item 10):**

You will recall that at your last meeting, we raised a concern about one aspect of the rules proposed to govern public participation at Combined Authority and Joint Committee meetings. This was in relation to questions from the public - whilst we welcomed the fact that every effort will be made to provide replies to questioners in advance of committee meetings, we strongly argued, in the interests of transparency, openness and local democracy, that questioners should also be permitted to ask an oral supplementary question(s) at the meeting itself.

At the last meeting in June, our comments were noted. Yet we see that in the version of the report presented to you today, nothing has changed and there is still no provision for supplementary questions – we strongly urge that you reconsider this.

#### **3. Potential removal of bus lane at Hambrook near the M32:**

We wish to draw to your attention an issue raised in a public statement at our meeting, which highlighted the issue of the potential removal of a bus lane at Hambrook, near the M32. Whilst we understand this is part of an 18 month trial in South Gloucestershire to improve air quality, we are nevertheless concerned that this could have an impact on

bus service reliability at a time when the Combined Authority and all West of England authorities should be taking all action possible to promote buses and public transport use. We would like reassurance that all authorities have been appropriately involved in discussions on this matter.

#### **4. Concern about late amendments to committee reports:**

It is recognised that there will be circumstances where report recommendations may occasionally need to be amended prior to decisions being taken at Combined Authority Committee meetings, e.g. in the interests of achieving clarity about a decision to be taken.

However, scrutiny members are concerned that new recommendations should not be added to reports at a very late stage, either at or just before committee meetings, thus allowing no opportunity for any such amendments to be scrutinised.

For example, the committee notes that after it had scrutinised the published Investment Fund report at its 12 June meeting, a significant amendment was made (at the 14 June Combined Authority Committee meeting) to recommendation 16 whereby £3.5m was earmarked for the delivery of Yate park and ride subject to completion of business cases as required. The original recommendation sought an allocation of £500k to develop outline business cases for strategic Park and Ride.

Members do not consider late amendments to reports to be good practice and would ask that this is avoided.

#### **5. Integrated ticketing – future work:**

Members were very interested to learn of the further work being taken forward on this important project and engaged in a useful discussion with officers around this. We fully support the report recommendations and further work.

#### **6. Employment and Skills Plan:**

Members noted that the plan sets out a comprehensive assessment of the current position across the region in relation to employment and skills. Members felt, however, that greater ambition needs to be articulated about what will be achieved through the plan's implementation; robust SMART targets/indicators will need to be set so that improvements can be measured. Members asked that an update be brought to our next meeting.

Cllr. Stephen Clarke  
Chair, West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee

(to be presented at the 19 July West of England Combined Authority Committee by Cllr Winston Duguid, Vice-Chair, West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee)